

Address given by Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons (22 January 1948)

Caption: On 22 January 1948, addressing the House of Commons, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, condemns the Soviet Union's political ambitions and calls for greater unity amongst the countries of Western Europe.

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3.37 p.m.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Ernest Bevin): I realise that there is intense interest in the House in this Debate, which is to last two days. I am also so conscious that what I say can so easily be misinterpreted in other countries that I propose to exercise very great care in the presentation of the Government's position. We are, indeed, at a critical moment in the organisation of the postwar world, and decisions we now take, I realise, will be vital to the future peace of the world. What, however, I have first to put before the House is the factual background against which decisions must now be taken. I do not propose to weary the House with a long history, because every Member is already conversant with it; there have been so many Debates in connection with these problems. I must, however, recapitulate in so far as it is essential for an understanding of His Majesty's Government's proposals for the future.

The story begins with a series of conferences which were held during the war, and at which many ideas were formed. Some were crystallised. Some were not. In this connection, of the political developments that have taken place, one of the main issues at that time, affecting the line of subsequent policy was connected with the future of Poland. The solution arrived at Yalta was looked upon by His Majesty's Government at that time as a sensible compromise between conflicting elements, but there is no doubt that, as it has evolved, it has revealed a policy on the part of the Soviet Union to use every means in their power to get Communist control in Eastern Europe, and, as it now appears, in the West as well. It therefore matters little how we temporise, and maybe appease, or try to make arrangements.

It has been quite clear, I think, that the Communist process goes ruthlessly on in each country. We have seen the game played out in Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, more recently in Rumania, and, from information in our possession, other attempts may be made elsewhere. Thus, the issue is not simply the organisation of Poland or any other country, but the control of Eastern Europe by Soviet Russia, whose frontiers have, in effect, been advanced to Stettin, Trieste and the Elbe. One has only to look at the map to see how since the war, Soviet Russia has expanded and now stretches from the middle of Europe to the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin. Yet all the evidence is that she is not satisfied with this tremendous expansion. In Trieste we have difficulties. We had hoped that the method of international agreement would be allowed to work; but it has not been allowed to work, and so what should have been a great experiment in postwar international collaboration has only been a continuing source of friction and bother.

Then we have the great issue in Greece, which is similar to the others I have mentioned. It has been assumed — in fact, said — that the Soviet Union can wait; that the United States of America and Great Britain will get tired; and that the so-called Government of Communist rebels can be recognised later on without danger; and then, in the end, that a Communist Government will be forced upon Greece, and she will be incorporated in the Soviet system of Communism with the rest. Here, let me make His Majesty's Government's position quite clear. We had hoped to be out of Greece. We had hoped that after the first election a Government would be formed; that in time subsequent elections would take place, and the whole process of democratic development would be allowed to function. But that has not been allowed, because a state of virtual civil war has been perpetuated the whole time. So, it is not a question of what sort of elected Government there is in Greece — Liberal, Coalition, or whatever it might be — but it is a ruthless attempt, constantly maintained, to bring that country in the Soviet orbit.

Like Trieste, the Greek issue involves the signatures on treaties recently signed by all of us, all the Allies, including the Great Powers. I would remind the House that Greece had claims for an alteration of her frontiers. I came to the conclusion, rightly or wrongly, that probably Greece would be more secure if Great Britain did not insist upon that, and that the signatures on the Peace Treaty would have been a guarantee on our honour of her integrity, and there would be no attempt to pursue and trouble her further. But that has not been permitted. I know that I have been pursued in this country on this Grecian question as if it were a question between a Royalist and a Socialist Government or Liberal Government. It is nothing of the sort, and never has been. I beg all my friends in this House to face the fact: This is a dangerous situation. It is a case of power politics. We have been trying to leave Greece an independent country and to get out of it; but

we also want her northern neighbours, and everybody else, to leave her alone and to get out of it. We will do that immediately they lift their fingers and honourably agree.

I would remind the House that the United Nations have been brought in, but they have been flouted by the Balkan neighbours of Greece. There is a very real danger that they and their Soviet mentors may make a great blunder over this business. In all solemnity, I would advise great care. Provocations like these lead sometimes to serious developments which we, and I hope they, are anxious to avoid. It would be better to settle this matter in accordance with the decisions of the Assembly of the United Nations than in the promotion of civil war, or in giving any kind of recognition to the Marcos junta, or in attempting the methods which have been applied elsewhere. There is the Assembly decision, and if we accept Assembly decisions in other matters, we should accept the decision in the case of Greece. I say no more than this, that it is dangerous in international affairs to play with fire.

We have had other examples since the war, which I need not go into now — wars of nerves and pressure upon weaker neighbours. It is the considered view of His Majesty's Government that attempts to settle international affairs by political barrages and by wars of nerves reduce the chances of finding acceptable solutions, and make agreement difficult, if not impossible. Propaganda is not a contribution to the settlement of international problems. They are all so important that the only way to solve them is coolly and calmly to deal with them on their merits. So much for the background of Eastern Europe. I would remind the House that it is under three years since the war ended, and I hope still that, with the right use of power and organisation, these difficulties may be overcome. Meanwhile, we must face the facts as they are. Our task is not to make spectacular declarations, nor to use threats or intimidation, but to proceed swiftly and resolutely with the steps we consider necessary to meet the situation which now confronts the world.

Let me now turn to the background in Germany, which has led to considerable difficulty. Here again, there were recent Debates, so I will confine myself to a limited survey. There was a discussion at Yalta about the dismemberment of Germany. His Majesty's Government have always considered that dismemberment would inevitably start an irredentist movement, causing a resurgence not of a peaceful Germany, but of a spirit of war. For those reasons we have been against it. We, therefore, welcomed the change of attitude that appeared to have evolved by the time we got to Potsdam. In a sentence I will make clear what it was. The proposal was limited to central agencies, to the evolution of a new German State on a new basis; and to do it there was to be economic unity, and a gradual evolution on a Four-Power basis which would lead ultimately to a peace treaty and a German Government competent to sign it.

That, I think, describes in a sentence the approach to the whole problem. After we left Potsdam, things began to go wrong. The central agencies did not materialise, and it was not long before we discovered, in the Four-Power Conferences in Berlin, that the Soviet Government had taken to hurling accusations at the Western Allies at meeting after meeting, instead of trying to evolve a common policy. Real progress seemed almost impossible. I do not deny that many things were done, and I want to pay my tribute to the Russian representatives who, when free to discuss things on their merits, are grand people to get on with, but who, when it comes to this political business, are held up and this delay and irritation then proceeds. The military governors left to themselves could have settled far more than they did in Germany on the basis of Potsdam, if they had been permitted to do so.

We have had discussions about these problems at the Council of Foreign Ministers, where at every step we have tried to meet anything which might look like a legitimate claim. But, the Moscow Conference last spring was certainly very revealing. We were there over six weeks. It is a matter of historical knowledge that His Majesty's Government devoted time and energy to trying to give that conference a working basis; but any rational meeting, where there was a will to do business could have done in a week everything we did in that six weeks. It was I must confess, very wearying, and even difficult to keep one's temper at times. Calm judgment in the conditions under which we had to work was very difficult.

Then, between the Moscow and London Conferences, other events took place. I will not enumerate many of them, but perhaps the most important development, which brought all this to a head and caused the whole issue of Europe to be focused, was the proposal by Mr. Marshall for a European recovery programme. That

brought out what must have been there before. In other words, this programme brought vividly to light what must have been under the surface, and what was responsible for these attitudes ever since the war, and, if I may say so, for some of the events we had to face during the war.

The conception of the unity of Europe and the preservation of Europe as the heart of Western civilisation is accepted by most people. The importance of this has become increasingly apparent, not only to all the European nations as a result of the post-war crises through which Europe has passed and is passing, but to the whole world. No one disputes the idea of European unity. That is not the issue. The issue is whether European unity cannot be achieved without the domination and control of one great Power. That is the issue which has to be solved. I have tried on more than one occasion to set forth, in this House and at international conferences, the British policy which has been carefully considered in connection with Europe.

This policy has been based on three principles. The first is that no one nation should dominate Europe. The second is that the old-fashioned conception of the balance of power as an aim should be discarded if possible. The third is that there should be substituted Four-Power co-operation and assistance to all the States of Europe, to enable them to evolve freely each in its own way. As regards the first principle, I am sure this House and the world will realise that if a policy is pursued by any one Power to try to dominate Europe by whatever means, direct or indirect — one has to be frank — one is driven to the conclusion that it will inevitably lead again to another world war and I hope that that idea will be discarded by all of us. It is this which His Majesty's Government have striven and will continue to strive to prevent.

With the old-fashioned balance of power, it was a question of having a series of alliances, and so manipulating them that, as each State moved in a particular direction, it was counteracted. I have no doubt that that led to intrigues and all kinds of difficulties, particularly for the smaller States, which often became the instruments of great Powers. On behalf of His Majesty's Government, I have stated that we will not use smaller powers as instruments of policy to produce difficulties between the larger Powers; thereby giving the smaller Powers a chance to evolve, under the umbrella of the Four Powers, without the feeling of fear or conflict. His Majesty's Government cannot agree to Four-Power cooperation while one of those four Powers proceeds to impose its political and economic system on the smaller States. On the contrary, as public opinion in those States changes, and as their economic and social development progresses, none of them will willingly submit to the Great Powers interfering and preventing the introduction of economic changes, or any other changes, which they deem to be for their own good.

There is another factor giving great cause for anxiety. It evolved largely with Hitler and Mussolini, and now, I am afraid, it has become an instrument of a very dangerous kind in Europe, and that is what we describe as the "police State." We did not imagine that this would be maintained after the war, but it is, and it is carried out with ruthless efficiency. I must say, while we hear talk about elections and democracy, that where the police State exists, votes count for very little. It is true that the votes have not disappeared, but it is the voter himself who disappears and the successful candidate if he dares to have an opinion of his own.

As we saw in the Press the other day, some members of parliament in Bulgaria said that they objected to the budget, and they were immediately threatened because they had objected to the taxation proposed. The Americans and ourselves were immediately condemned, and made responsible for these men's opinions about their Budget. I have never known anybody welcome a Budget, especially when it involves increased taxation; and all this is purely nonsensical. I regret these statements, especially by a man like Dimitrov, the former hero of the Reichstag, who now seems to have taken to himself some of the characteristics of the bully and the braggart. This kind of thing creates very great difficulty.

As another illustration, we have the case of Jacob Kaiser, the leader of the German Democratic Party, the Christian Democrats, who has been prevented from leading his party in the Soviet zone of Germany for not bowing to the Soviet will. His friends have been visited in their houses and have been intimidated. The Social Democrats, I may add, had been dealt with and, indeed, suppressed in the Soviet zone much earlier.

One could give hundreds of instances of the subtlety and cruelty of this police State instrument, and I cannot see how a healthy democracy can grow up while it exists. If there was one thing that aroused Britain and

made her fight so hard in the world war, it was when she realised fully, for the first time, what the Gestapo meant. We hoped that the end of the war would mean the end of the police State, as well as of all instruments of that character. We have always accepted — I would emphasise this — and I repeat it now, that the friendliest relations should exist between Russia and the States on the Russian frontier; indeed, not only on the frontier — we want these friendly relations with everybody. It is madness to think of anything else if we are ever to have peace. That is quite a different thing from cutting off Eastern Europe from the rest of the world, and turning it into an exclusively self-contained bloc under the control of Moscow and the Communist Party.

Mr. Gallacher (Fife, West): That is not true.

Mr. Bevin: The European Recovery Programme brought all this to a head, and made us all face up to the problem of the future organisation. We did not press the Western Union—and I know that some of our neighbours were not desirous of pressing it — in the hope that when we got the German and Austrian peace settlements, agreement between the Four Powers would close the breach between East and West, and thus avoid the necessity of crystallising Europe into separate blocs. We have always wanted the widest conception of Europe, including, of course, Russia. It is not a new idea. The idea of close relationship between the countries of Western Europe first arose during the war, and in the days of the Coalition it was discussed. Already in 1944 there was talk between my predecessor and the Russian Government about a Western association.

His Majesty's Government at that time indicated to the Soviet Government that they would put the establishment of a world organisation first on their list. In any case, they proposed to rely on the Anglo-Soviet Alliance for the purpose of containing Germany, and eventually there might be similar arrangements between France and Great Britain and France and the Soviet Union for this purpose. That was in 1944. We also indicated that it might be desirable to have defence arrangements with Western Europe for the purpose of instituting a common defence policy against the possible revival of German aggression, and to determine what role each State should play in the matter of armaments and the disposal of Forces. We indicated that when these matters arose, we would keep the Soviet Government informed, which we did. In 1945, however, there was a great deal of Soviet criticism, especially of this country, over the supposed formation of a Western *bloc* against the Soviet Union, which was quite untrue. At that time, we had not even had a meeting with our Western Allies to discuss the matter; and yet daily this criticism was poured out on the radio and in “ Pravda “ and the rest of it — a constant repetition.

When I was in Moscow, therefore, in December 1945, and saw Generalissimo Stalin, I explained that the United Kingdom must have security arrangements with France and other neighbouring countries, just as the Soviet Union had with their neighbours, to which he raised no objection. I stated that whatever we did would not be directed against the Soviet Union. To this he replied, “I believe you,” Anything His Majesty's Government do now in this matter will not be directed against the Soviet Union or any other country, but we are entitled to organise the kindred souls of the West, just as they organise their kindred souls. As late as January, 1947, Stalin took a similar line with Field-Marshal Montgomery.

In 1946, I communicated to Mr. Molotov our intention of entering into negotiations for an Anglo-French Treaty. Mr. Molotov expressed interest, and asked to be kept informed. He made no comment. I kept him fully informed about the Treaty of Dunkirk. I have had no communication since about that matter. When the European recovery proposal was put forward in the same spirit, it was offered to the whole of Europe, including Russia. There were no grounds, therefore, for the fear that it was to be directed against the Soviet Union or used for any ulterior purpose. So clear was it that it was intended for the whole of Europe, that in Poland we know that even the Communist Party were anxious to participate. So they were in Hungary and Rumania, and Czechoslovakia even announced her intention to accept the invitation. About Yugoslavia and Bulgaria I never had any precise information.

Eventually all these States were ordered to abstain. What about sovereignty? We took no step to advise; we merely sent out our invitation for people to answer, and come freely if they wished to. If they did not, we knew that they were not staying away of their own volition.

The House will remember the conversations I had with M. Bidault and Mr. Molotov. At first, I was reasonably hopeful that everyone, including Russia, would play their part in this great offer. What was the idea behind this European recovery programme? First, that we should do what we could for ourselves and in co-operation with one another, and then secure from the American people supplementary aid. If we want to maintain our independence we have got to do all we can for ourselves. I think it is quite right when all neighbours co-operate together to see what they can do for one another. Then if they find they are stuck they can go to a pal to borrow something to help them through. I do not think that that is taking away one's independence.

In the course of the discussions in Paris there came a change, as it was decided by the Soviet Union — and I have very good grounds for accepting this — that rather than risk the generosity of the United States penetrating Eastern Europe and Europe itself joining in a great co-operative movement, the Soviet Union preferred to risk the Western Plan or Western Union — that is to say they risked the creation of any possible organism in the West. My further opinion is that they thought they could wreck or intimidate Western Europe by political upsets, economic chaos and even revolutionary methods.

Mr. Piratin (Mile End): Why not give the facts?

Mr. Bevin: I will tell the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

Mr. Piratin: The right hon. Gentleman is not telling the facts; he is skipping them.

Mr. Bevin: What Mr. Molotov said at Paris to M. Bidault and myself —

Mr. Piratin: Yes.

Mr. Bevin: — on the last day when we were there was that if we proceeded with this plan, he indicated to us quite clearly that it would be bad for both of us, particularly for France.

Mr. Piratin: If the Foreign Secretary will give way for one moment — [HON. MEMBERS: “No.”] Why does he not say what Molotov said in the first place?

Mr. Bevin: As the discussions went forward since the Paris Conference last June we knew almost the precise dates when these troubles were going to take place, and when these upsets were likely to occur. I must say this is rather unpalatable for me to have to do, but I suggest the world will never get right unless the thing is seen in all its nakedness and probably we will get on a better footing then.

As I have already said, it is no secret that Mr. Molotov threatened both ourselves and France that we would have to look out for these squalls if we went on with the European recovery programme. My answer to him, not boastfully but quietly, was that Great Britain had been accustomed to threats, that we should face them and that they would not move us from doing what we believed to be right. We have not, nor has France or any of the other nations who assembled in Paris deviated from that course. The best evidence that what I am saying is correct, as I am sure the hon. Member for Mile End (Mr. Piratin) will agree, is that the Cominform came into existence very quickly. M. Zhdanov and M. Malenkov are closely associated with it.

It has been clearly stated that the object of that body and of Soviet and Communist policy is to prevent the European recovery programme succeeding. I do not object to them earning to that conclusion, but because they came to that conclusion I do not see why I should be a party to keeping Europe in chaos and starvation. I cannot accept that proposition simply because the Cominform says it in their proposals. The fact is there have been great political strikes in France. Who disputes that they are behind them?

Mr. Gallacher: I dispute it. On a point of Order. When a Minister challenges hon. Members to dispute something and one of them accepts his challenge, is it not recognised courtesy for the Minister to give way in order that the Member can dispute the statement?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of Order at all. It is for the Minister to decide whether he should give way, and if he does not choose to give way he need not do so.

Mr. Bevin: I am following the Communist philosophy never to give way.

Mr. Piratin: Except to Marshall.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Member continues to rise in his place and shouts across the Chamber I shall be compelled to take drastic action.

Mr. McGovern (Glasgow, Shettleston): Watch your heads.

Mr. Gallacher: Communists don't sell out.

Mr. McGovern: That is what every Communist does — sells out.

Mr. Bevin: I was once accused by a Communist newspaper of selling out and the courts gave me £7,000 damages. Perhaps the House will be interested to know I never got the order.

I was indicating that these strikes have been taking place and that the intention of the Soviets was to anticipate the interim aid from America so that by the loss of production at home, American aid would be nullified. That is not the way to express love of one's country and for one's own people.

Now for the steps we have taken in connection with this European recovery programme. As soon as I saw it, I submitted it to my colleagues and we felt that here was an opportunity of really trying to get Europe on its feet. The House will agree that we acted with promptness in order to get it going. We had no ulterior motive at all, and we did not intend to attack anyone. I should like to congratulate the staffs of the various Foreign Offices and Governments on the magnificent way in which they worked on this plan with a vigour and agreement which I think was amazing: When the plan was completed the United States officials were prompt to render the friendly aid promised by Mr. Marshall. I should like to pay my tribute to every one who worked for the practical realisation of the ideas expressed in Mr. Marshall's Harvard speech. The issue is now before the American Congress, and I say no more about it than that we in Europe are not holding back awaiting the decision of Congress; we are doing our best individually and in co-operation to help one another. We shall be able to do it still more when we know the final decision of the United States Congress.

With all these influences the London Conference was bound up. In spite of what was going on — on which our information was very good—I still went on arranging for the London Conference in November. I confess that events were not encouraging. The flood of abuse against ourselves and the world by M. Vyshinski in New York was calculated to rouse tempers, but I am glad to say it fell very flat with no effect on public opinion anywhere outside the Soviet zone of influence. We still went on trying to get the conference on a proper basis as I reported to the House before the Recess. Every day when there was a proposal discussed and an effort made to reach a practical conclusion we had to waste a whole day listening to abuse of the Western Powers. It is all very well, but everyone in this House is a public man. I ask each one here to try to imagine what it is like to sit there hour after hour and to have thrown at one almost every invective of which one can think and not answer back. I felt very often like the boy who was asked what he would do if he were hit on the one cheek by his school teacher. He said he would turn the other. His school teacher said “That is a good boy, Tommy, but supposing you were hit on the other cheek, what then?” The boy replied, “Then heaven help him.” I must confess that I felt very much like the schoolboy, and we had to suppress our feelings.

Now we have to face a new situation. In this it is impossible to move as quickly as we would wish. We are dealing with nations which are free to take their own decisions. It is easy enough to draw up a blueprint for a united Western Europe and to construct neat-looking plans on paper. While I do not wish to discourage the work done by voluntary political organisations in advocating ambitious schemes of European unity, I must

say that it is a much slower and harder job to carry out a practical programme which takes into account the realities which face us, and I am afraid that it will have to be done a step at a time.

But surely all these developments which I have been describing, point to the conclusion that the free nations of Western Europe must now draw closely together. How much these countries have in common. Our sacrifices in the war, our hatred of injustice and oppression, our Parliamentary democracy, our striving for economic rights and our conception and love of liberty are common among us all. Our British approach, of which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke recently, is based on principles which also appeal deeply to the overwhelming mass of the peoples of Western Europe. I believe the time is ripe for a consolidation of Western Europe.

First in this context we think of the people of France. Like all old friends, we have our differences from time to time, but I doubt whether ever before in our history there has been so much underlying good will and respect between the two peoples as now. We have a firm basis of co-operation in the Treaty of Dunkirk, we are partners in the European recovery programme, and I would also remind the House of the useful and practical work being done by the Anglo-French Economic Committee. Through this Committee we have already succeeded in helping one another in our economic difficulties, though at first, to tell the truth, neither of us had very much with which to help the other. But it was useful and the work it did was useful at a very critical moment. We are not now proposing a formal political union with France, as has sometimes been suggested, but we shall maintain the closest possible contact, and work for ever closer unity between the two nations.

The time has come to find ways and means of developing our relations with the Benelux countries. I mean to begin talks with those countries in close accord with our French Ally. I have to inform the House that yesterday our representatives in Brussels, The Hague and Luxemburg were instructed to propose such talks in concert with their French colleagues. I recall that after I signed the Dunkirk Treaty, on my way through Brussels to Moscow, I was asked by a newspaper correspondent, "What about a treaty with other countries including Belgium?" My reply was—I will quote it:

"I hope to sign a similar one with Belgium and with all our good neighbours in the West. The Labour Government will do everything possible to prevent misunderstandings arising from which aggressions might result. You have suffered from two wars; you have twice been occupied in two wars, and England has twice had to fight very hard. Great Britain is still conscious of the great role she has to play. She will do everything possible to prevent a new conflict in the West, whether it will come from Germany or elsewhere."

I hope that treaties will thus be signed with our near neighbours, the Benelux countries, making with our Treaty with France an important nucleus in Western Europe. We have then to go beyond the circle of our immediate neighbours. We shall have to consider the question of associating other historic members of European civilisation, including the new Italy, in this great conception. Their eventual participation is of course no less important than that of countries with which, if only for geographical reasons, we must deal first. We are thinking now of Western Europe as a unit. The nations of Western Europe have already shown, at the Paris Conference dealing with the Marshall Plan, their capacity for working together quickly and effectively. That is a good sign for the future. We shall do all we can to foster both the spirit and the machinery of co-operation. In this context I am glad to be able to tell the House that as a practical immediate measure to make our relations with Western Europe closer, His Majesty's Government are proposing to relax the ban on tourist travel. I shall have more to say on this subject a little later.

Our formal relations with the various countries may differ, but between all there should be an effective understanding bound together by common ideals for which the Western Powers have twice in one generation shed their blood. If we are to preserve peace and our own safety at the same time we can only do so by the mobilisation of such a moral and material force as will create confidence and energy in the West and inspire respect elsewhere, and this means that Britain cannot stand outside Europe and regard her problems as quite separate from those of her European neighbours.

Now with regard to the tourist traffic. This is a step which we propose to take pretty soon, I hope in the early summer, provided such arrangements can be made without involving us in the expenditure of gold or dollars and I believe that is possible to negotiate. In our view a system can be worked out bilaterally with different

countries which will enable a start to be made in the early summer. We hope to be able to publish in March a list of countries to which travel will be possible, and travel would then resume about 1st May. We are anxious to create conditions in which the peoples of the respective countries can associate, and I know of nothing more important to serve this end than the tourist traffic.

I would like to make it clear that we are not doing this merely to cater for people with lots of money. Adults will be allowed £35 and children £25 per annum. In this connection there are a number of organisations which provide cheap holidays abroad. These organisations have handled thousands of people and have rendered a great service in this field. I myself helped to create the Workers' Travel Association out of almost nothing, and in the progress of years it has grown to handling the foreign travel of many thousands of people. There is also the Polytechnic and many other bodies of a similar kind. Therefore, foreign travel is no longer a privilege of the few. It is the desire of large numbers of people. We hope to allow this exchange to take place both ways at the earliest possible moment.

Perhaps I may now return to the subject of the organisation in respect of a Western Union. That is its right description. I would emphasise that I am not concerned only with Europe as a geographical conception. Europe has extended its influence throughout the world, and we have to look further afield. In the first place, we turn our eyes to Africa, where great responsibilities are shared by us with South Africa, France, Belgium and Portugal, and equally to all overseas territories, especially of South-East Asia, with which the Dutch are closely concerned. The organisation of Western Europe must be economically supported. That involves the closest possible collaboration with the Commonwealth and with overseas territories, not only British but French, Dutch, Belgian and Portuguese.

These overseas territories are large primary producers, and their standard of life is evolving rapidly and is capable of great development. They have raw materials, food and resources which can be turned to very great common advantage, both to the people of the territories themselves, to Europe, and to the world as a whole. The other two great world Powers, the United States and Soviet Russia, have tremendous resources. There is no need of conflict with them in this matter at all. If Western Europe is to achieve its balance of payments and to get a world equilibrium, it is essential that those resources should be developed and made available, and the exchange between them carried out in a correct and proper manner. There is no conflict between the social and economic development of those overseas territories to the advantage of their people, and their development as a source of supplies for Western Europe, as a contributor, as I have indicated, so essential to the balance of payments.

What is to be the best method of dealing with this matter? We have been considering and planning for the territories for which we are responsible so as to establish particularly out of our capital production year by year, and also out of our production of consumption goods, a proper proportion in the right order of priorities to assist this development. Coincident with that planning, welfare and cultural development are being pushed ahead with great speed. Therefore, if we get the plan, we intend to develop the economic co-operation between Western European countries step by step, to develop the resources of the territories with which we are associated, to build them up a system of priorities which will produce the quickest, most effective and most lasting results for the whole world. We hope that other countries with dependent territories will do the same in association with us.

We shall thus bring together resources, manpower, organisation and opportunity for millions of people. I would like to depict what it really involves in terms of population whose standard of life can be lifted. We are bringing together these tremendous resources which stretch through Europe, the Middle East and Africa, to the Far East. In no case would it be an exclusive effort. It would be done with the object of making the whole world richer and safer. We believe there is an opportunity, and that when it is studied there will be a willingness on the part of our friends in the Commonwealth to co-operate with us in this great effort.

In the Middle East we have pursued a similar policy. We have a long standing friendship with the Arabs. The development of the Arab countries in the 30 years of their revived national independence has been remarkable, and our own country has made a very good contribution towards it. We shall continue these efforts, to build up a system of cooperation in the economic and social fields which will carry with it

responsibility for mutual defence on both sides. I have repeatedly said to representatives of the United States and of the Soviet Union that the Middle East is a vital factor in world peace. In addition, it is a life-line for the British Commonwealth. That statement has never been challenged. I think it is accepted by all. It is in that spirit that we have worked.

I think the House welcomes with me the recent Treaty with Iraq, negotiated and signed upon a basis of equality. There has been a lot of excitement in the morning papers about the reactions to the Treaty. There must have been some misunderstanding in Bagdad, but the Iraqi delegates should be able to remove it upon their return. The Iraqi Prime Minister, in a statement issued this morning, has said that that is his confident belief. Hon. Members may not have seen the statement so I will, with the permission of the House, read it. It is as follows:

“During our temporary absence some destructive elements in the country, whose number is fortunately limited, exploited some innocent students and succeeded in creating disorders. On our return to Iraq we shall explain the intentions of the new Treaty to the Parliament and people of Iraq. We are confident that it will be found that the national aspirations of the country are fully realised in this Treaty and that the overwhelming majority of the country will support it. It is with this belief that my colleagues and myself signed this Treaty.”

Neither I nor the Iraqi Prime Minister would have set our signatures to any document which ignored the aspirations of the people of Iraq. We assure our Iraqi friends that we intend to face the problems common to us, whether they are problems of defence or of social and economic development. I hope that the Treaty, which has been worked out with such care, will serve as a model, when it has been carefully studied, for other Middle East defence arrangements. I am discussing the situation first with Transjordan, whose Prime Minister is coming here to talk with us in a few days. The Emir Feisal will be here at the beginning of next month, and we shall have a talk with him, and through him with our good friend, his father, King Ibn Saud. I hope that other such talks will follow. I ought to say a word about Egypt, where a different set of historical conditions has to be taken into account. I want to get away from the atmosphere of past disagreements and to concentrate upon what is mutually acceptable in the interests of both countries. I am not without hope of being able to do so at an early date, but it may take some little time.

Now I turn to the United Nations, All the steps I have mentioned, in the Middle East and in the Western Union, are in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations. When the ideological quarrel between the Powers is set aside — and it will be, sooner or later — and provided that the will to peace takes its place, all the things of which I have spoken will fit into a world pattern. They are all designed upon a regional basis to fit in with the Charter of the United Nations. It will be remembered that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State attended the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. He will deal with matters relating thereto in his speech. He will deal also with any information that hon. Members may want.

I have to confess that the United Nations up to now has been disappointing, but it might have been so under any circumstances, and it may be better to have the disappointments at the beginning than to have the enthusiasm at the start and the disappointments later on. In any case, I do not despair. There is an enormous amount of work being done in the United Nations — economic, social, cultural and so on — all of which is leading to world understanding. At the same time, the nations have collaborated in many fields, and they have collaborated a good deal in the settlement of disputes — none of them major disputes, as we understand them — and even in the Security Council itself there have been some very good discussions and good decisions taken.

It has achievements as well as failures, but it is handicapped by this ideological thing that is constantly coming up, and the extensive use of the Veto which was never contemplated, I am quite sure, by anyone who took part in its creation. There have been commissions in Greece and Korea. The tasks are hard. There is one going to India and Pakistan now, and I wish them well. At last the one in Indonesia seems at least to have created a truce which may lead to a settlement and I express the hope that, notwithstanding our disappointments at the beginning, the whole country will remain behind it because we have to have some world organisation in any case. We must try to make it work if we can.

Now I want to say a word about the United States, which seems to be a sort of bogey in the minds of a good

many people. Everybody has the idea that the United States has a great fund of dollars which it is trying to hurl at everybody for some ulterior motive. All I can say is that if anybody follows the hearings in Congress to try to get these appropriations, I do not think they bear that interpretation. They are a democratic country trying to look where they are going, and what responsibilities they are undertaking. Our primary task, as I have said, is to build up with our friends in Western Europe. We have to get resources together and repair a war damaged continent, and we have to carry out the development of these new resources overseas. The United States and the countries of Latin America are clearly as much a part of our common Western civilisation as are the nations of the British Commonwealth. The power and resources of the United States — indeed, I would say the power and resources of all the countries on the continent of America — will be needed if we are to create a solid, stable and healthy world.

When I speak of the United States, I am not thinking of the country misrepresented in propaganda as a sort of Shylock of Wall Street, but a young, vigorous, democratic people. It is a country not only of great wealth and great resources but one whose people are moved by a good will and a generosity which many of us in the Old World are apt to take for granted. American policy, like the policy of all great countries, must have regard to American interests, but it has been so often traduced as purely selfish that I think it is time to pay a tribute to the great heart of the American people which found expression in the European Recovery Programme. I was quite convinced, and I am now, that there was no political motive behind the Marshall offer other than the valuable human motive of helping Europe to help herself, and so restore the economic and political health of this world. That is, of course, an American interest; but it is everybody's interest, it is not exclusively American.

This does not make the offer less unselfish.

If we take the sequence of events in the United States from Lend-Lease in the war — and I cannot let it go by though I have mentioned it before — I think it is worth calling the attention of the House again to the tremendous work in connection with U.N.R.R.A. What sort of Europe we should have had without U.N.R.R.A., I really do not know; it is too horrible to contemplate. I think it would have been swept by epidemics. Everybody had a share of U.N.R.R.A., including Soviet Russia and the Eastern States — everybody — and that cost the United States £675 million, Canada £35 million, and it cost this country, even in our impoverished condition, £155 million. It was an event which stemmed horrible disease such as we had following the 1914-18 war, which most have forgotten. Therefore, the European Recovery Programme is a natural sequence in order to try to help to rebuild.

It is true that the Americans are as realistic as we are. They see the greatest dangers to world peace in economic chaos and starvation. It was the argument used over and over again that we made a mistake with Germany in leaving her in such depression that it allowed a Hitler to arise. The instinct is that it is much better to spend money now on rebuilding a healthy and self-reliant Europe than to wait for the devils of poverty and disease to create again conditions making for war and dictatorship. It is sound sense, and His Majesty's Government welcome it. Neither can I see anything wrong in America insisting that the nations of Europe should do everything in their power to put their house in order as a condition of American aid. If we are to look for hidden political motives, then I detect them much more clearly behind the attempt to sabotage the Paris Conference than behind the great Marshall offer. I am afraid I am wearying the House, but it is a very long subject. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

May I turn as quickly as possible to Germany and German organisation, where we and America are in partnership? In this connection I would like to call the attention of the House to the conflict over the political organisation of Germany, which is bound up with the zonal problem. We stand for a united Germany, not a dismembered or divided Germany. We have been in favour of a centralised German Government but not an over-centralised German Government which in our view could be a danger to peace. In this I believe the Americans, the French and ourselves, despite slight differences between us, can reconcile our views. On the other hand, the Soviet Government are pressing for an over-centralised Government which we know could be used in the same way to develop a one-party dictatorship as has been done in the Eastern European countries, and we cannot agree to it.

It became clear a year ago that Germany was to be made, as a result of the series of disagreements between the Great Powers, a terrific financial liability on the United States and ourselves. No food was to come from the East into the West, no exchange, and hence the burden would fall upon our exchequers. I indicated that we had to make it pay by hook or by crook. We really had to make our zone go, and take the liability off the taxpayer here. Then the Americans offered fusion of the two zones in 1946, and negotiations for the first fusion agreement then took place in New York.

After the failure of the Moscow Conference, I was pressed very hard to agree to some kind of parliamentary instrument in the bizonal area. I opposed it then because I felt that, if that step was taken, it would mean probably the creation of the final division of Germany and of Europe. We therefore kept our arrangements to the economic field. While it is not bound to succeed, we have tried to make this fusion work, and work better, by setting up an Economic Council. We are still hopeful in Germany, and I hope I shall not be told I am too patient — because I am not waiting. We are going on with the work. By taking the right lines in our bizonal organisation in Germany, I believe that in the end we shall achieve a proper organisation of Central Europe. We have first to get the organisation on our own side efficient.

Later in 1947 we proceeded with a new fusion agreement. Now, as a result of talks between the American Military Governor, and our Military Governor we have improved, expanded and extended the Economic Council as an interim basis. But that is an interim matter, and in a few weeks' time it is intended that the British, French and Americans shall have an exchange of views on the three zones, as well as the two. Those talks will take place at a very early date. What we have done up to now is an interim arrangement.

Another big problem for Germany, which we are still trying to deal with on a Four-Power basis, is currency reform, which is absolutely imperative, but very difficult to arrange. We are not going to assume that the Four-Power arrangement is ended at all. We are going to make our three zones work economically in order to take the load off our Exchequer here. But we will go on to try to see whether in the end we can make it work. The Germans have a part to play in this. After all, the Germans are more responsible than anyone else in the world for the mess the world is in, and if they are to win the respect of the world again and come back into the comity of nations, they must work hard and act and administer their decisions; it cannot be given to them.

I had a sense of disgust when I read of German farmers holding back food from their own kith and kin, and I can assure the House that the most resolute steps will be taken to put an end to that. But we would like the German administration, to whom we have handed powers, to do it, because it is important, if confidence is to be established, to see that that is done. General Clay and General Robertson are to be congratulated on the work carried on in the two zones. When the Frankfurt Agreement is completed, I will circulate it to Members of the House, so that they can see it in its detail, and I will not weary the House with it now.

I must also say that in working for this German recovery we have to bear in mind all the time the countries which had suffered from her attack, rather than to put German recovery ahead of the recovery of those who were her victims, and that we shall continue to do. We are making trade agreements between Western Germany and Eastern Europe. All kinds of steps are being taken to develop the export trade, and to put Germany back on her feet. But I must say once again that if the German people are going to rely on us, or act as if we are to feed them all the time, they are suffering from a delusion. Germany must work and produce, like other countries.

Mr. Pickthorn (Cambridge University): Would the right hon. Gentleman permit me. I am sorry to interrupt. I am not sure, but I think he inadvertently said “Eastern Europe” instead of “Western Europe.”

Mr. Bevin: I said trade agreements have been made between Western Germany and Eastern Europe. There have been agreements made with Poland, and we are going on with that policy, which we think a right one to follow. We are doing nothing to break down the contacts, in spite of all the political difficulties. Time will not permit me to go into all the difficulties associated with Germany, and I must leave it to my colleagues, who will speak later.

We have persistently endeavoured to make a Treaty for Austria. I cannot understand why a great nation of 200 million people like Soviet Russia should find it necessary to delay a settlement with a small country of seven millions. Whatever the causes may be, I think this torturing of Austria for all these years is really reprehensible. However, at the end of the conference there was a sign that there was a possibility of a settlement. I seized it at once, and referred it to the Deputies and I have been promised a new Soviet proposal in January. I hope they will do it, and let us have a chance of settling that problem.

One other matter I must mention in passing is Japan. There is a conflict again, because it is desired by the Soviet that we should refer the Peace Treaty to the Council of Foreign Ministers; not a very encouraging prospect. Really, it is very difficult to agree to it. Here are Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Burma and the Netherlands, who were all in the Japanese War from the very day of Pearl Harbour, and while I am ready to admit that the maintenance of great Russian armies in the Maritime Provinces probably had an effect before they came into the war, the actual time that Russia was in the Japanese War was but a few days. Yet I am asked to agree that they should take a predominant position over the Allies who fought, in the Japanese War all the way through. Really, we cannot expect people to accept that. What we propose is that the 13 or 14 countries which were involved should, form the Peace Conference. In that way I think we are more likely to clear up the Far Eastern position, and I hope the Soviet Government will see their way clear to accept that, and let us get on with the business of, at least, making one good peace treaty. That, of course, includes the United States, Canada and other countries.

Burma has already been debated in the House, and our relations with Burma now become the responsibility of the Foreign Office. We are looking after their interests as well as those of the other Far Eastern countries by means of the system which has been developed there.

The Foreign Office staffs often get criticised, and we are always supposed to select the wrong people, but I do not want to let this occasion pass without paying a tribute to the staffs of that great office. Since the war the work has been terrific. Recently, to give an example, with the breakdown of convertibility, practically every agreement that we have made had to be changed before the ink was dry. Otherwise, there would have been no food and no exchange. I think the other Departments of State will agree that the magnificent way the ambassadors and their staffs worked to prevent any serious disturbance, either in trade or exchange, as a result of that difficulty, entitles them to the praise I am giving. They had a very difficult task, and I am quite certain they will continue to serve with success. They certainly deserve great credit.

To conclude, His Majesty's Government have striven for the closer consolidation and economic development, and eventually for the spiritual unity, of Europe as a whole; but, as I have said, in Eastern Europe we are presented with a *fait accompli*. No one there is free to speak or think or to enter into trade or other arrangements of his own free will. The sovereignty of the Eastern European nations is handicapped. What of the West?. Neither we, the United States nor France is going to approach Western Europe on that basis. It is not in keeping with the spirit of Western civilisation, and if we are to have an organism in the West it must be a spiritual union. While, no doubt, there must be treaties or, at least, understandings, the union must primarily be a fusion derived from the basic freedoms and ethical principles for which we all stand. It must be on terms of equality and it must contain all the elements of freedom for which we all stand. That is the goal we are now trying to reach. It cannot be written down in a rigid thesis or in a directive. It is more of a brotherhood and less of a rigid system.

In spite of criticism levelled at her, Europe has done an amazing job since the end of the war. One has to be conversant with it to understand just what it has been like, with all the economic confusion that was involved everywhere. The countries of Europe are returning now to established law and order. There had never been a war like this before. Never has it been so difficult to make peace. It is not a question of sitting down together, as it was at Versailles, and then at the end signing a treaty. This time it is systems, conceptions and ideologies which are in conflict. I do not want to take an irrevocable step which will make future generations pay, just because I was over-anxious to gain a settlement for settlement's sake. This time it has to be a real settlement which lasts for a long time.

In this new settlement Germany, like all other European nations, must find her place, but, as I have said, she

must not come before her recent victims. As other nations settle down, Germany can settle down, but she must be prevented from becoming aggressive again. We shall welcome her return as a democratic nation. In all our efforts that is the objective for which we have been working, but I must repeat to the Germans that although I am not blaming the whole German people, they were the great factor which brought the world to this condition. They must realise that, as a people, they have got to work hard to get their own country and the world back to a proper equilibrium. I have been glad to note the growing realisation of this fact among the Germans themselves.

Despite all the artificial barriers set up, and the propaganda blared out, which no doubt will increase after this Debate, we shall pursue a course which will seek to re-unite Europe. If the present division of Europe continues, it will be by the act and the will of the Soviet Government, but such a division would be inconsistent with the statements of the highest Soviet authorities and of Stalin himself. He told Mr. Stassen in Moscow last April that “for collaboration it is not requisite that peoples should have an identical system.” Similar statements have been made on other occasions. We have always tried, and we are still trying, to cooperate with the peoples of Eastern Europe on that basis, although the activities of the Cominform, like those of its predecessor the Comintern, afford the greatest hindrance to mutual confidence and understanding.

However, we shall not be diverted, by threats, propaganda or fifth column methods, from our aim of uniting by trade, social, cultural and all other contacts those nations of Europe and of the world who are ready and able to cooperate. The speed of our recovery and the success of our achievements will be the answer to all attempts to divide the peoples of the world into hostile camps. I may claim for myself, at least, that my whole life has been devoted to uniting people and not dividing them. That remains my objective and purpose now. That is the object and purpose that His Majesty's Government, of which I am the instrument, seek to promote in dealing with other countries.